



Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr., Governor
James W. Payne, Director

Indiana Department of Child Services
Room W392 – MS47
402 W. Washington Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2739

317-232-4705
FAX: 317-232-4490

www.in.gov/dcs

Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline: 800-800-5556

Regional Services Council Protocol **WORKING DRAFT**

updated as of July 24, 2006

Because of the importance for service delivery to children and families in our neighborhoods, communities, counties and state, the coordination of service availability and delivery is critical to protecting children and families. This process of service availability and delivery is best done at the local level. Experience and statistics show that rural communities often do not have the demand for, or the capacity to, deliver a wide variety of services. This is made more complicated since each individual case presents difficult and expensive needs or a changing variety of issues. Finally, this is even true with medium to large population counties.

In order to address these issues, including the need for coordination in wider geographic and geopolitical boundaries, the Regional Services Council presents a solution. This Protocol has will assist in the process of determining service availability, delivery and effectiveness. It is intended to be a guideline protocol and each region should use it as a basis for making available services in the region.

Membership

The Regional Services Council is made up of the following voting members.

- 1) Regional Manager who shall serve as chair of the committee
- 2) Three local Judges having juvenile jurisdiction
- 3) Three County Directors in the region
- 4) One Supervisor from the region
- 5) One Case Manager from the region
- 6) One Foster Parent from the region
- 7) One Guardian ad Litem/CASA from the region

Membership should be representative of the region taking into consideration the guidelines listed below. Once established, original members will determine that $\frac{1}{2}$ of the members will serve two year terms and $\frac{1}{2}$ of the members will serve three years. Thereafter, every two years, members whose terms are expiring will provide notice to the Regional Manager of their intent to continue



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serving on the Board or stepping down from the Board. Any vacancies will be filled by the process below.

Selection of Judges having Juvenile Jurisdiction

The Judges should meet in the manner best selected by them – in person, telephonic, e-mail, etc. – and choose among them three Judges who will be the voting members of the Regional Services Council. Once selected, the names should be submitted to the Regional Manager and the Director of the Indiana Department of Child Services. The designated Judges can send a proxy to serve in their stead if they are unavailable.

Selection of County Directors

It has been suggested that it would not be appropriate for the County Directors, to be chosen from the counties where the Judges having Juvenile Jurisdiction are from. However, it remains with the County Directors to discuss among themselves their representatives on the Regional Services Council with the Regional Manager making the final determination. .

Selection of the Supervisor

The Supervisor is to be selected by the Regional Manager after consideration of recommendations made by the County Directors. In no event is the supervisor to be from the same county where the County Directors who are members of the Regional Services Council serve, unless otherwise agreed upon by all of the County Directors.

Selection of the Case Manager

The Case Manager is to be selected by the Regional Manager after consideration of recommendations made by the County Directors. In no event is the case manager to be from the same county where the county directors who are members of the regional services council serve, unless otherwise agreed by all of the County Directors.

Selection of Foster Parent

If there is a foster parent association or membership, formal or informal, in the region where the selection is to be made, the choice of the foster parent representative should be made by that association. If there is not an association, formal or informal, then the foster parent representative may be chosen in a manner determined by the above-mentioned members of the Regional Services Council. One method, only as a suggestion, is to have each County Director nominate a foster parent as they may determine, and then ask those foster parents to meet and choose among them, a representative. The goal is to make the selection of this position as meaningful and as open as possible, so that a broad base of representation is available.



Selection of Guardian ad Litem/CASA

If there is a GAL/CASA association or membership in the region where the selection is to be made, the choice of GAL/CASA representation should be made by that association. If there is not an association then the GAL/CASA representative may be chosen in a manner determined by the above-mentioned members of the Regional Services Council providing that the GAL/CASA is a representative of a “certified” program. One method, only as a suggestion, is to have each County Director nominate a GAL/CASA as they may determine, and then ask those GAL/CASA to meet and choose among them, a representative.

The ultimate intent is to ensure that there is broad based representation bringing experience, common sense, advocacy and commitment to the responsibility inherent in the Regional Services Council.

It is agreed that Lake County and Marion County may modify the membership requirements above as long as the core membership outlined above is followed and the Council is representative of the needs of the respective counties given the personnel available.

Meetings

The meetings shall be chaired by the Regional Manager who shall provide sufficient notice of meetings being especially sensitive to the responsibility of the members of the Regional Services Council. Judges have responsibilities requiring them to be on the bench and numerous other responsibilities which allows limited time for this important Council. County Directors have the responsibility for the management of the county to which they are assigned. Supervisors manage staff who manage the investigation of and ongoing services to abused and neglected children. Case Managers provide that investigation and service responsibility. Foster parents have day to day responsibility for abused and neglected children and guardian ad litem provide essential services in monitoring the children under their watch. Therefore, coordinating the Regional Services Council will be a very difficult task. However, recognizing that difficulty, the importance of the Regional Services Council cannot be understated.

Notice

Notice should be given in a manner best agreed upon by all of the parties and it is suggested that the first meeting be held at a time convenient to all members of the Council so that organizational issues can be addressed and agreed upon. Thereafter, it is entirely possible that not all members of the Council can meet at the stated or agreed upon date, time and place at all times. Therefore, for the first meeting, telephonic or other arrangements should be made to coordinate the date, time, place, and length of the organizational meeting.

Thereafter, all members of the Council should agree on the date, time, place and length of the meeting and the manner in which the meeting shall be held. It is recommended that the meetings be scheduled at a regular time so that all members can plan and attend subsequent meetings.



Open Door Policy

Regional Service Council meetings fall under the Open Door Law as specified in IC 5-14-1.5-5. In compliance with these requirements, all Regional Service Council meetings will:

1. Post the date, time and location of monthly meetings at least 48 hours before the meeting. Once meeting schedules are established, annual posting of the regularly scheduled meetings will be placed on the Department of Child Services Web-Site.
2. Deliver a notice by regular mail, electronic mail or fax to all new media that have requested written notice.
3. Post the Agenda no less than 48 (forty eight) hours prior to the start of the meeting at the entrance to the meeting location.

Quorum

Attendance by two-thirds (2/3) of the members shall constitute a quorum and all decisions or votes made at the Council meeting at which a quorum is present shall be the final decision of the Council. Two-thirds of the members is defined as seven (7) members.

Notice for the meetings, whether previously scheduled or scheduled individually, will contain the date, time and place of the meeting, the agenda and the issues to be decided at that meeting.

Meeting Location

Meeting location should be a place centrally located so that all parties have the same or equal opportunity to attend based on travel distance. Arrangements should be

made ahead of time to ensure that not only “Council Members”, but all interested parties, agencies or groups have the opportunity to attend, witness and participate.

Agenda

The agenda should be prepared at least two weeks before a scheduled meeting and sent to all members of the Regional Services Council for consideration of additional agenda items or comment on those listed. Any changes/modifications should be sent to the Regional Manager at least one (1) week prior to the meeting.

The agenda may be mailed or sent to a number of other individuals or entities who request such notification including, but not limited to, all Judges having juvenile jurisdiction in the region, all County Directors, the Director of the GAL/CASA program in each county, if one exists, the Director or Supervisor of any foster parent groups or licensing agencies providing foster homes in the region, all service providers known to be providing services in the region, the President of the Council or Commissioners and the Chief Executive Officer in each county in the region, media representatives known to be serving the counties in the region and other individuals or agencies who have expressed interest in attending or participating in the Regional Services Council meetings.



Frequency of Meetings

The first meeting of the Regional Services Council should be scheduled for October of 2005, if possible, but no later than December of 2005.

After the first meeting, monthly meetings shall occur with sufficient notice to the parties to make arrangements for the members to participate. If a Regional Services Council determines that there are insufficient agenda items to have a meeting for a particular month, prompt notice will be provided to all attendees and other parties who wish to be notified, and a notice will be posted at the meeting site and on the website.

Minutes

Keeping accurate minutes is an important requirement of the Regional Services Council. Because of the significance of the Regional Services Councils, the minutes will document the participation, topic and conclusion. At the beginning of each meeting, a member of the Regional Services Council, or his/her designee shall be appointed to maintain the minutes in as accurate detail as possible. All minutes shall be recorded on the standardized RSC Minute Template in order to track similar information from all Regions.

The minutes should be sent by email to all members of the Regional Services Council, parties who are in attendance and request the minutes, parties who may have requested the minutes whether they were present or not, to the Director of the Department of Child Services, the Chief of Staff and the Deputy Director of Programs and Services.

Conduct of Meeting

The conduct of the meeting should be one of an open format and follow all guidelines of the "Open Door" law. The agenda should be followed to ensure that the time set for the meeting is respectful of the importance of the Regional Services Council and the time of the members of the Council. In all respects, open communication and dialogue is important.

During initial meetings, the Council shall review services available in each county of the region. In addition, efforts should be engaged in by the region to determine the county and region needs so that needs can be matched with available services, services may be expanded or new services obtained.

The intent and purpose is to ensure that the Regional Services Councils expand service capacity to meet service needs and types. This can only be done if the regional services council and the members of the community openly share information, discuss the needs and service opportunities and ensure full service delivery opportunities.



Once the Regional Services Council has determined the service need and availability, communication should be made with the Deputy Director of Programs of the Department of Child Services for assistance in obtaining the needed services. This may include sending notices to potential service providers, particularly including those currently providing services within the counties in the specific region, as well as statewide. In working with the program department of the Department of Child Services, a request for proposal will be issued by the Regional Services Council for particular service types and the program department of the Department of Child Services will assist in obtaining all necessary services. It may also include assisting with the preparation of proposals, including service standards, as well as assisting with the review, selection and monitoring process.

Initial Child Welfare Standards will be posted to the DCS website on November 15, 2005. Regional Services Councils will have the opportunity to review these standards and determine if the services outlined meet some or all of their needs. Providers chosen through this initial Request for Proposal Process can provide services to the County, Counties, or Region designated regardless of the funding stream (federal, state or local dollars).

Allocation of Funds for Service Delivery

The Regional Services Council will approve all funding decisions for service delivery over \$1,000 based on a review of Recommendations presented by the Regional Manager. This will include all programs/services funded through federal, state or local funding streams.

Participation Of The Public At Meetings

During the meeting, the Regional Manager shall conduct the meeting in such a way that all members of the public who are in attendance, particularly those who serve children and families in the region may be heard based on scheduled agenda items and/or time available. Those who are present and wish to discuss issues should be respectful of the agenda, the time limit of the meeting and the Regional Services Council members. Therefore, the Regional Manager shall have sufficient authority to restrict or limit dialogue and discussion so that items on the agenda can be heard.

While Regional Service Council Meetings are open to the public, the public must follow the outlined steps below in order to present at these meetings. These measures are put into place so as to recognize and adhere to the Judicial Cannon of Ethics that all Judges must adhere to both in and out of the Courtroom.

1. At the conclusion of every agenda for a RSC meeting, there will be an opportunity for questions from the community.
2. Those wishing to participate in this portion of the meeting must submit their interest in being placed on the agenda at least one (1) week in advance of the scheduled Regional Service Council meeting to the Regional Manager who is hosting the meeting. This must be in writing, either by e-mail or written correspondence.
3. The Regional Manager will notify those who requested time to speak at the Regional Service Council Meeting on the Agenda during this portion of the meeting and advise the presenters as to the length of time they have to present. This time not to exceed five (5) minutes depending on the Agenda.



4. The Regional Manager will also provide all speakers placed on the Agenda of this protocol and the guidelines they must follow.

Documents distributed during the Regional Service Council meeting shall be made available to the public by request only. At the conclusion of the meeting, if a member from the public would like to receive a copy of the documents distributed during the Regional Service Council meeting, they must request this in writing to the Regional Manager who will then forward copies of the requested documents to that individual.

At no time should this be seen as an opportunity for an agency, program or individual to present, highlight or make reference to a specific program or service provided by their agency. The Regional Manager has the ability to conclude any outside presenter's remarks if it is deemed that use of this time is inappropriate for the good of the meeting.



